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USS NASSAU (LHA 4) — THE NAVY'S "TOP GATOR"

# Gator Times



## Nassau's Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society Fund Drive 2010





# Gator Times

30 years  
LHA 4

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**On The Cover:**  
Senior Chief Navy Career Counselor (SW/AW) Butch Gibbs from Shelton, Conn., stands confident before getting pied at USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society Pie in Your Face fund drive in the ship's Hangar Bay.  
Photo by MC1(SW) James Stilpoc

Greetings Shipmates, Families and Friends,

Nassau is now more than 100 days into her 2010 deployment and the ship continues to support our nation's maritime strategy here in the 5th Fleet area of responsibility.

That strategy's core capabilities include maintaining forward presence, deterrence, sea control, power projection, maritime security and humanitarian assistance/disaster response.

Nassau has so far engaged in all six of these core capabilities in this deployment, from responding in the wake of the devastating earthquake in Haiti in January, to our current mission of conducting maritime security operations and deterring piracy off the Horn of Africa.

A large part of our mission here involves operating in close cooperation with our Coalition partners. To that end, Nassau recently hosted the commanding officers of the French Foreign Legion's 13th Demi-Brigade, based in Djibouti, and the Royal Netherlands Navy destroyer HNLMS Tromp (F803).

In the midst of all this hard work, Nassau's Sailors are still finding time to relax. The "Liberty at Sea" program is in full swing, offering each crewmember a

## Captain's Call

Capt. Ronald Reis  
Commanding Officer  
USS Nassau (LHA 4)



quality day off while underway and helping to relieve the stress of day-to-day operations.

As always, I appreciate everyone's effort aboard this ship, as well as the support from Nassau's Family and Friends at home. We're at the halfway point of our deployment and are looking forward returning home.

Until next time stay motivated and remember to motivate those around you!

## CMC Corner



Shipmates, Nassau Family and Friends,

We've been underway for more than three months and are quickly approaching the halfway point of our deployment. This is a great milestone I believe we've all been looking forward to, both on the ship and back home.

I've sensed a lot of excitement with the Family Readiness Group's upcoming adult and children's halfway parties. I hope all our family members can take advantage of both events.

Aboard Nassau I hear a lot of talk among the Sailors about hitting the halfway mark and we are planning a special event to celebrate here as well.

Reaching the halfway point is great; however I need each Sailor to remember that it's not time to let our guard down. Our workload will still remain the

same. We still have to conduct training, sustain our qualifications, maintain the material condition of the ship, and perform our daily duties. I ask that safety continues to be our first consideration, and that we continue to work hard and watch out for one another.

As spring turns to summer here off the Horn of Africa, the weather is getting noticeably warmer. We're regularly seeing temperatures of more than 100 degrees, making it even more important to maintain air conditioning boundaries in order to keep the interior of the ship as cool as possible. Also, drink plenty of water so you can stay hydrated and remain on top of your game.

To our family and friends back home, I thank you for your continued support, warm thoughts, and prayers. Keep those packages coming!

Until next issue, take care and God bless!



# From America, With Love

By MC2 Coleman Thompson  
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) one of the most important morale boosters for the Sailors and Marines is hearing from loved ones and receiving tokens that remind them of home.

But not many service members think about the process involved in delivering mail from America to a ship halfway around the world.

The journey begins at Fleet Post Offices (FPO), central hubs where mail is collected and sorted for shipment. For the East Coast these are located in New York and Miami. Ships coordinate with the FPOs to give them an accurate ten day forecast of where they will be. The FPO then sends the mail to a location nearby.

From there the shipments can either be picked up by helicopter from the ship or, if there is a large amount, be sent on supply ships for transfer during an underway replenishment.

For the ships of the Nassau Amphibious Ready Group (NAS ARG), it was a rough road delivering some of the mail after the group briefly diverted to support Operation Unified Response, the humanitarian assistance/disaster response efforts in Haiti. Now that the group is operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility, 60,000 pounds of mail waiting for pickup was finally delivered to the Sailors and Marines waiting for word from home.

"We had a very large shipment of mail come through that we had been waiting on for quite some time," said Chief Logistics Specialist (SW/AW) Benjamin Cintron, the leading chief petty officer for the Post Office aboard Nassau. "We weren't sure if we were even receiving mail because there were a lot of other mission critical items that took priority and we only had a limited amount of time to move it all."

The dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Robert E. Peary (T-AKE 5) carried the mail to Nassau on March 13. The cargo included parts necessary for the ship's mission as well as food and other supplies, which had to be transferred before the mail could be sent over.

"The whole crew really helped out to ensure we got



Chief Postal Clerk (SW/AW) Benjamin Cintron, from Lackawanna, N.Y., organizes a large shipment of mail in the hangar bay of USS Nassau (LHA 4).  
Photo by MC2 Coleman Thompson

everything we needed transferred over quickly," said Cintron. "They knew that the mail was coming after the vital supplies, so they really pulled together and moved everything as fast as possible. I was really impressed."

"I've never seen anyone react like the crew reacted to that last shipment," said Logistics Specialist 3rd Class Daniel Biggs. "They all really wanted that shipment and came together to get it."

The team in Nassau's Post Office knows that the mail is an important morale booster for the crew, and as the days begin to blur into each other anything that lifts their spirits is greatly appreciated.

See "Mail," page 10

# Nassau's Bake Shop Rises to the Occasion



Aviation Boatswain's Mate Airman William Standiford of Cameron, Mo., cuts a tray of brownies in the USS Nassau (LHA 4) Bake Shop.  
Photo by MC2 Patrick Gordon

By MC2 Patrick Gordon  
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Of all the aromas around USS Nassau's (LHA 4) galley, few are as distinct and alluring as those from the bake shop. The Sailors and Marines who work there prepare all the baked goods consumed on the ship. From bread to cookies, biscuits to cakes; the bake shop does it all.

"We man the shop 24 hours a day with a night crew and a day crew," said Bake Shop Supervisor Culinary Specialist Seaman Apprentice Cameo Hughes, from Tucson, Ariz. "The night crew makes

most of the products and the day crew prepares them for the line. When we're not cooking, we're cleaning. It's always busy."

For some, the busy pace drives home how many baked goods the bake shop provides to the ship.

"It's a little weird at times," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate Airman William Standiford, from Cameron, Mo., who has been temporarily assigned to the Bake Shop for the past three months. "You never think about how much a whole crew eats until you have to make the food and get it out to them, but I like it."

In addition to standard baked goods like bread, rolls and cookies, the bake shop also bakes cakes for special occasions on the ship, such as reenlistments and promotion ceremonies. But regardless of the product, the bake shop crew is capable of not only making the product, but making it their own.

"We use recipe cards for all our products, and just about everything we make is from scratch," said Hughes. "I really like to experiment with the recipes a little; add a few things here and there to change it up for the crew. Just adding some vanilla, or chocolate chips or even different colored frosting to the recipe can make it fun and more appealing to the eye."

With the dedication and precision of a fine-tuned machine, Nassau's Bake Shop rises to the challenge of helping feed the crew everyday.



Culinary Specialist Seaman Apprentice Cameo Hughes from Tucson, Az., measures salt before baking rolls in the USS Nassau (LHA 4) Bake Shop.  
Photo by MCSN Patrick Gordon



# Nassau Earns <sup>\$</sup>BIG for Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society

By MC2 Patrick Gordon  
USS Nassau Public Affairs

USS Nassau (LHA 4) raised more than \$40,000 during the 2010 Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) fund drive, nearly doubling the ship's projected goal of \$23,000.

The fund raiser ran through the month of March.

The NMCRS is a nonprofit organization sponsored by the Department of the Navy with programs funded entirely by charitable donations. The organization's stated mission is to provide financial, educational and other assistance to members of the naval services of the United States, eligible family members and survivors when in need.

Services provided by the NMCRS include thrift shops, interest-free loans and grants to meet emergency needs, needs-based scholarships and interest-free loans for educational purposes.

"Every division aboard Nassau really contributed to the fund drive," said CI Division Officer Ensign Amy Sullivan, of Greenville, S.C. "It's really important for Sailors and Marines to give to NMCRS because you never know when you might need their services. The more money we raise for them, the more Sailors and Marines they can help."

During the fund drive, Nassau instituted various commandwide fund raising events such as bingo, "Spend a Day in Your Rack" raffles and a "Pie in the Face" auction. The events not only helped raise charitable donations, but also acted as morale boosting events for the crew.

One winner of the "Spend a Day in Your Rack" raffle, Fire Controlman 3rd Class Miguel Denis of Chicago, said he really enjoyed taking part in the fund raising raffle.

"I have a lot of friends who've had to use NMCRS before for one reason or another, so I thought buying a ticket would be a great way to support a good cause," said Denis. "It was really great to have that day off, too. Best \$20 I ever spent."

Even Nassau's senior leadership was involved in the fund raising activities. Nassau's Executive Officer Capt. Samuel Norton took an active role in the "Pie in your Face" event, in which pies were auctioned to the highest bidder and thrown in the face of a chosen officer or chief petty officer.

"We exceeded our goals and part of that came from just trying to make it fun for everyone," said Norton. "Where we are while we're deployed, we were able to contact nearly 100% of the crew, and everyone was really willing to give from the heart to help a good organization."



Photo by MC1(SW) James Stalpeck



Photo by MCSN(SWIAW) Jonathan Pankau



Photo by MCSN(SWIAW) Jonathan Pankau



Photo by MC1(SW) James Stalpeck



Photo illustration by MCSN(SW) Chris Williamson



# Professional Athletes Score with Visit to Nassau

By MCSN(SW) Chris Williamson  
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Three NFL players visited Sailors and Marines aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) as part of the United Service Organizations (USO) 2010 tour.

New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees, New Orleans Saints tight end Billy Miller and free agent linebacker Donnie Edwards arrived on a SH-60 Knighthawk and were greeted by Nassau Commanding Officer Capt. Ronald Reis, Amphibious Squadron Eight (CPR-8) Deputy Commander, Capt. Mark Scovill and 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (24 MEU) Commanding Officer Col. Peter Petronzio.

After a brief visit to the Captain's Inport Cabin for refreshments, they visited various locations around the ship including the bridge, combat systems, medical, and main control.

Brees, a Dallas native, said that he's always been a fan of the military and visiting service members is something he's always felt strongly about.

"I enjoy giving the men and women overseas a little taste of home," said Brees. "We're able to talk with them, shake hands, take pictures, sign autographs, and let them know how much we care about them, and that we always think about them."

The players had dinner with the crew on the Mess Deck, then participated in a football throwing contest and signed autographs in the Hangar Bay.

Logistics Specialist 2nd Class (SW) Ravinesh Prasad from Coosbay, Ore., said that the players' visit was a great way to raise the crew's morale.

"Their visit definitely brightened up my day," said Prasad. "The football throwing contest was the best part because the crew got to see a pro in action. The more events we have like this, the merrier, especially since we haven't stopped at any ports yet."



New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees and New Orleans Saints tight end Billy Miller sign autographs in USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Hangar Bay  
Photo by MC2 Patrick Gordon

When night fell, the athletes enjoyed watching AV-8B Harriers launch from the flight deck, prior to taking turns firing a .50-caliber mounted machine gun under the supervision of Nassau's Gunner's Mates.

Gunner's Mate 1st Class (SW) Michael Braun from Syracuse, N.Y., the safety brief coordinator for the gun shoot, said he enjoyed the football players' company.

"It was a chance of a lifetime to meet a star in person," said Braun. "It was also nice to break free from the everyday monotony and have some fun on the gun mount."

Braun also said that the athletes shot surprisingly well for their first time.

To finish off the evening, the athletes played a few rounds of spades in the Chiefs' Mess before heading to bed.

Brees said that his stay aboard Nassau was unbelievable and his first time spending the night aboard a ship was definitely a great thing to experience.

See "Football," page 10

# Chess Players in Good Company Aboard Nassau



USS Nassau (LHA 4) Commanding Officer Capt. Ronald Reis carefully considers his next move on his revolutionary war chess set located in his stateroom.  
Photo by MCSN (SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau

By MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau  
USS Nassau Public Affairs

USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Monday night chess club and Morale Welfare and Recreation Division holds a chess tournament every third Wednesday of the month during this deployment.

The tournament consists of 16 players competing for prizes ranging from ship's store items to the opportunity to play Nassau's Commanding Officer Capt. Ronald Reis on his Revolutionary War chess set in his stateroom.

Reis started playing chess as a child in Germany. Once his father taught him how to play, Reis would go to the park and challenge the old German men who went there to play on the large chess boards. A memory that stuck out in Reis' mind was the chess pieces almost as big as he was.

"I feel that chess has a direct correlation with life because it forces you to think many moves ahead and plan long term before taking the initial step,"

Reis said.

Cmdr. Henry Stephenson, the most recent chess tournament winner, is playing Reis in the captain's standard one-move-a-day game. Reis leaves his stateroom door open when he is not there so Stephenson can enter whenever he is ready to make his next move.

"It is surprising to see how many Sailors aboard Nassau are avid chess players and I think that the captain's one-move-a-day game is a great idea," Stephenson said.

"Monday night chess and the Wednesday tournament are also

great ways to let off some steam. I go down there often and I can say it's very humbling to be leveled at chess by a lance corporal."

"Competitions like these inspire camaraderie amongst Sailors and Marines," said Marine 1st Lt. Nicholas Schrobach from Warwick, N.Y. "Even when not competing, chess is a great way to build friendships."

"None of these events would be possible without the 20 donated chess sets from the Virginia Chess Federation (VCF), said Lt. Victoria Chappell, a Nassau chaplain from Virginia Beach, Va., and the sponsor of Monday night chess.

"The VCF has really blessed us with these chess sets," Chappell said. "It's always good to have a new avenue for friends and fun when the days get long and stressful on deployment."

Chappell said servicemembers who are interested in chess can look up tournaments in the Virginia area by visiting the VCF website [www.vachess.org](http://www.vachess.org).



# Nassau on Four Year Green "H" Streak

By MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau  
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Commander, Naval Surface Forces recently announced USS Nassau (LHA 4) as a winner of the Force Health and Wellness Unit Green "H" for the fourth year in a row.

The Green "H" is awarded to ships with the highest overall health levels in the Fleet. The departments involved in the Green "H" team are Medical, MWR, Chaplain, Safety, Training, DAPA, and the command fitness coordinators.

"Medical is always the one that receives the recognition for Green 'H' and we are a large part of the process. There are many departments that deserve the same amount of recognition as we do," said Lt. Rebecca Short from Richboro, Pa., the ship's medical administration officer and lead coordinator of the Green "H" Team. Short went on to say that Green "H" is a year-long process and a stringent inspection precedes the award.

"I've been a part of Nassau's Medical Department for all four years of the current Green 'H' streak and I know the award is not easy to achieve," said



Sailors and Marines aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) assist patients being evacuated from Haiti during a medical emergency in flight deck triage in January. Photo by MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau

Hospitalman (SW) Raymond Rider from Vermilion, Ohio. "This is why it's such a big deal for everyone when we get it. It shows the rest of the Navy that we perform at a constant standard of excellence."

Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (SW/AW) Jennifer Tillard from Virginia Beach, Va., said keeping 1,047 Sailors healthy and mission ready resulted in Nassau's success.

"We received a score above 90 percent for excellence," Tillard said. "This means that not only did we receive the Green 'H' for excellence among the fleet's medical facilities, but we also placed among the top 10 of the ships who received the award."

The leading chief petty officer of Nassau's Medical Department, Senior Chief Hospital Corpsman (SW/AW/FMF) Scott Radke, said he is excited to win it for four years in a row and has no doubt that the fifth will be attainable for his hospital corpsmen if they continue to perform so well.

"This was the first year that Green 'H' was required for the Battle Effectiveness Award so when we received that I already had a good idea that we took Green 'H' again," said the Virginia Beach, Va., resident. "The whole ship performs at this standard of excellence and I have full confidence that Medical Department will continue to perform at that level."



HMCS (SW/AW/FMF) Scott Radke from Virginia Beach, Va., briefs Sailors and Marines aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) as they prepare to receive patients being evacuated from Haiti during humanitarian relief efforts in January. Photo by MCSN (SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau

# Deep in the Guts of the Ship

By MC2 Coleman Thompson  
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Down in the depths of the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4) the Sailors working in the main propulsion spaces keep the vessel moving, the electricity buzzing and water flowing.

The Sailors working in the Main Propulsion One Division (MP-1) maintain the generators and boilers that keep Nassau alive. These boilers create steam, which keep the screws spinning behind the ship, as well as turn the turbines that create electricity from Nassau's four generators. Two evaporators create 70,000 gallons of water every day for both drinking and for the machinery.

The engineering spaces consist of a maze of pipes, grates, and gauges that monitor the intricate processes taking place down below. But the first thing anyone would notice upon entering the engineering spaces is the intense heat.

"It is extremely hot down here," said Ens. Brandon Christian, from Denver, as he looks at a thermometer that reads more than 100 degrees. "That's actually lower than usual; average temperatures down here is close to 120 degrees."

On top of the blistering temperatures the Sailors work long hours and keep shifts to ensure there are always 12 people available.

"While we do have long hours, we try to ensure that our guys have adequate time off for sleep and personal time," said Chief Machinist's Mate (SW) Wayne Marksbury, from Englewood, Fla. "We keep our shop running 24 hours a day, even when we're in port, because without us the Nassau just doesn't work. We're the heart of the ship."

Marksbury believes that the harsh work environment, coupled with the necessity of their job, is what really holds his team together.

"Between the myriad of jobs that we have to do across a rather large space, we still try to emphasize teamwork," said Christian. "It's absolutely vital to what we do down here."

"Mail," from page 3

"Any time the crew hears 'Mail Call,' it's their favorite time of day," said Cintron. "We enjoy giving out the mail just as much as the crew does receiving it. I absolutely love my job. It boosts everyone's morale on board. Seeing Sailor's faces light up like Christmas - it's why I chose this job."

Cintron said he expects the mail to be coming more regularly. Now that the group has a more regular operational tempo he said he believes the shipments coming from ashore will be arriving on time.

Aside from the postal service, the crew can also communicate with friends and family back home via email and phone lines that are enabled at certain time each day.

"Football," from page 7

As the sun came up, the players were treated to a hearty breakfast in the Wardroom and received souvenirs from Nassau, CPR-8 and 24 MEU.

Before departing, Brees, Miller and Edwards signed a few more autographs for the crew and thanked Reis for a wonderful visit.

"The reception and hospitality made our visit aboard Nassau one we'll remember forever," said Brees.

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The 2010 Deployment Cruisebook, documenting Nassau's Final Cruise.



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# COMMAND ACHIEVEMENTS



## ESWS Qualified

IT3 James Fowler  
IT3 Nhat Le  
ITSN Amanda Hill  
HM1 Alvin Miles  
HM1 Brenton Jones  
HM1 James Carbone  
IS3 Milly Williams  
MC1 James Stilipee  
BMSN Micheal King  
BM3 Larry Haney  
ENFA Antonio Hopkins  
CS3 Dennard Elder  
ITSA Cory Johnson  
CTM2 Skyler Boston

ENFN Randall Roberts  
PS1 Jason Tillerson  
AE1 Timothy Finnen  
AD1 Ryan Thorpe  
IT3 Travis Gentz  
AT1 Paul Thorson  
QM3 Demetrius Washington  
MRFN Shantel Simon-Phillip  
ABH3 Derrick Battle  
ABFC Erick Powell  
OSSN Josephmarlo Guilas  
ADC Charles Warren III  
EN2 Stephen Weber  
IS3 Sarah Feinberg

HM1 Jonathan Knotts  
QM2 Kerenski Vickers  
RP1 Johanna Arocho  
MM3 Phillip Swainbank  
ABH3 Olmedo Gonzalez  
BM3 Alan Wrobel  
SN Pablos Britos  
HM2 Eunite Merle  
SN Kolt Fayard  
ACAN Joseph Gilbert  
LS3 Keith Parrish  
IS2 Kalie Sharpe  
SHSN Charles Pannell  
LS1 Essi Amegee



## EAWS Qualified

AC2 Sernia Robertson  
AC1 Brian DeLong  
OS2 Sanchez Allison  
AC2 Jaqueline Shannon  
ITC Robert Welsh  
BMC Ulysses Hall  
GSMC Stephen Lowe  
IS2 Kori Ricord  
SH3 Victor Nyarko  
LS1 Corey Thicklen

AS2 Bryson Mijares  
ENCS Marvin Tharrington  
MCSN Jonathan Pankau  
ACAA Joseph Melton  
ETC Dawn Ainsworth  
BMCS Randy Searcy  
AC3 Nicholas Ilarraza  
ABF3 Daniel Zubiria  
ABFAN Adrian Amolo

LS1 Joseph Gless  
AO3 Jonathan Flemming  
CTT1 Kevin Johnson  
IT2 Matthew Hopkins  
FC2 Timothy Courtright  
ITC Shaquana Fernandez  
LS1 Mario Gutierrez Jr.  
IT1 Roderick Brice  
CTR1 Jerome Reed  
CS3 Antonio Bailey

